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One should not think that reciting *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is one's ordinary duty, no different from other duties like eating, walking, talking with people, and so on. If serving *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* becomes one's only duty then with every step one takes, with every morsel of food one swallows, and with every breath one will be serving Lord Hari.

— *Vakṛtāvali* (Garland of divine discourses),

— *Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada*

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**A DEVOTEE BHĀGAVATA IS AS GOOD AS
THE BOOK BHĀGAVATA**

*His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami
Prabhupada*

Here is the remedy for eliminating all inauspicious things within the heart which are considered to be obstacles in the path of self-realization. The remedy is the association of the *Bhāgavatas*. There are two types of *Bhāgavatas*, namely the book *Bhāgavata* and the devotee *Bhāgavata*. Both the *Bhāgavatas* are competent remedies, and both of them or either of them can be good enough to eliminate the obstacles. A devotee *Bhāgavata* is as good as the book *Bhāgavata* because the devotee *Bhāgavata* leads his life in terms of the book *Bhāgavata* and the book *Bhāgavata* is full of information about the Personality of Godhead and His pure devotees, who are also *Bhāgavatas*. *Bhāgavata* book and person are identical.

The devotee *Bhāgavata* is a direct representative of *Bhagavān*, the Personality of Godhead. So by pleasing the devotee *Bhāgavata* one can receive the benefit of the book *Bhāgavata*. Human reason fails to understand how by serving the devotee *Bhāgavata* or the book *Bhāgavata* one gets gradual promotion on the path of devotion. But actually these are facts explained by Srila Naradadeva, who happened to be a maidservant's son in his previous life. The maidservant was engaged in the menial service of the sages, and thus he also came into contact with them. And simply by associating with them and accepting the remnants of foodstuff left by the sages, the son of the maidservant got the chance to become the great devotee and personality Srila Naradadeva. These are the miraculous effects of the association of *Bhāgavatas*. And to understand these effects practically, it should be noted that by such sincere association of the *Bhāgavatas* one is sure to receive transcendental knowledge very easily, with the result that he becomes fixed in the devotional service of the Lord.

nityaṁ bhāgavata-sevayā

The more progress is made in devotional service under the guidance of the *Bhāgavatas*, the more one becomes fixed in the transcendental loving service of the Lord. The messages of the book *Bhāgavata*, therefore, have to be received from the devotee *Bhāgavata*, and the combination of these two *Bhāgavatas* will help the neophyte devotee to make progress on and on.

—Purport to *Srimad Bhagvatam* 1.2.18

**WHO ARE DEBARRED FROM TASTING THE PURE
JUICY SWEETNESS OF THE BHĀGAVATAM?**

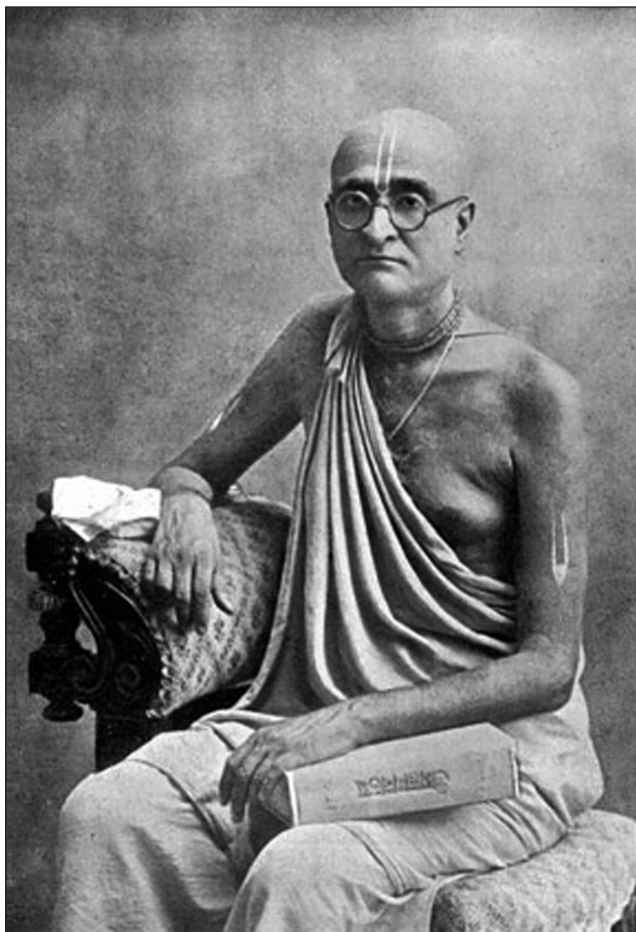
Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati

Thakur Prabhupada

There are those who instead of listening to the *Bhāgavatam* discourses of liberated *paramhansa-vaiṣṇava*, make a fuss of listening to the lectures on *Bhāgavatam* given by professional persons and others that are full of tendencies that are harmful to the culture of true well-being in order to gain some sensuous gratifications through the poetic literary grammatical, and other such false kind of appreciations expressed by these speakers. They are debarred from tasting the pure juicy sweetness of the *Bhāgavatam*, and are deluded to think that the bad or indifferent taste is the *Bhāgavatam*'s true taste. When persons like Parikshit who are sure of the temporariness of human life, listen to the *Bhāgavatam* discourse from liberated *paramhansa-vaiṣṇavas* like Sri Sukadeva, they become eternal tasters of *Bhāgavatam-rasa*, absolved from all worldly attachment. The process of *jñāna*, the process of *vairāgya*, and the process of *bhakti* are convergent. They all culminate in *nāiskarma* (freedom from *karma*) instead of gratification of senses.

Weal and woe are two different things. If you roam about for your welfare or happiness, woe is your due. Likewise, it is not proper to hope for the tasty fruit of pleasure. The karmic rituals laid down in the scriptures are not to be performed by those who are liberated. The fruit of *karma* is sometimes pleasurable and otherwise it is bad and painful. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* does not inculcate the teachings of *karma*. The *Bhāgavatam* speaks about the supersoul, God, so that the jivas may achieve the highest good. In it are described *nāiskarma* and the character of a *paramhansa*, the absolutely selfless devotee of God. The *Bhāgavatam* is to be listened to, to be read well, and to be understood with deep deliberation.

We should compare and contrast what the *Bhāgavatam* teaches with what it is said in other treatises. If you absorb yourself in books other than the *Bhāgavatam* you will come under the influence



of the processes of *karma* and *jñāna*, pleasure and pain, birth and death. Thereby you may get *dharma* (auspiciousness) *ārtha* (wealth) and *kāma* (fulfilment of desire). One desirous of emancipation may renounce worldly life, but this is not service to God. It is only the devotees that do so. God is not served even by the practice of *astāṅga-yoga*, which gives various perfections and opulences such as the mystic powers *animā* (the power to become infinitesimal), etc., *laghimā* (the power to become as light as hydrogen), etc. What to speak of the salvationists, who want to get rid of weal and woe of worldly life and be the recipient of enjoyment in the negative form?

The *Bhāgavatam* speaks of those who have adopted the paths of *karma*, *jñāna* or *yoga* as having taken up the wrong course. Liberation is easily acceptable to one who adopts bhakti. True well-being may not be available when you are the gainer of what is pleasing, because true well being consists in giving pleasure to God. A devotee says, "I must do service to God. He may accept it or reject it." This is true bhakti.

—From Sri-Caitanya's Teachings. Edited by Sri Bhakti Vilās Tīrtha

Goswami Maharaja. Sree Gaudiya Matha. Madras

WHEN LORD KṚṢṆA IS UNMANIFEST, HE WILL APPEAR FROM ŚRĪMAD-BHĀGAVATAM.

Conversation between Uddhava and Parikshita

Sri Uddhava said: O King Parikshita, you are certainly glorious. Your desire has been fulfilled by your undivided devotional service to Lord Krishna, because your mind is absorbed in this saṅkīrtana festival. It is your great fortune that you have such incomparable affection for Vajranabha and Krishna's queens. This is quite proper because Lord Krishna has given you this body and power. Among the residents of Dwarka, they are the most glorious. There is no doubt about it. Lord Krishna ordered Arjuna to escort them to Vraja so that they could reside there. Illuminated by the effulgence of Srimati Radharani's face, the moonlike mind of Lord Krishna constantly illuminates Sri Vrindavan, the site of Radha's pastimes. Sri Krishnacandra is eternally complete. Thousands of spiritual sparks oscillate in all directions from His sixty-four qualities.

The full moonlike Krishna, who possesses sixty-four prominent qualities, is constantly illuminating this land of Vraja. O King, the right foot of Lord Krishna is the residence of Vajranabha, who destroys the fear of his subordinates. In this incarnation, Lord Sri Krishna has bewildered everyone through Yogamaya. By her influence, they have forgotten their constitutional position and they appear miserable. There is no doubt about it. Without Krishna manifesting in one's heart, no one can realise his constitutional position. Krishna's manifestation within the hearts of the living entities has been covered by *Māyā*. When Lord Hari personally appears at the end of Dvāpara-yuga in the twenty-eighth yuga cycle and lifts the covering of *Māyā*, then He becomes manifest. O Maharaja Parikshita, the time of those manifest pastimes has recently ended. Therefore I will now tell you the means of having Krishna manifest within one's heart. When Lord Krishna is unmanifest, He will appear from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Whenever and wherever the devotee *Bhāgavata* hears and recites the book *Bhāgavata*, at that time and at that place Lord Krishna personally appears. Wherever a verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, or even a half-verse of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, is recited, Lord Krishna and His beloved gopis manifest there.

After attaining a human birth in the land of Bharata, those who do not hear *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* due to sinful activities are committing suicide. A person who regularly hears or recites *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* delivers the forefathers of his wife, mother, and father. By studying and hearing *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *brāhmaṇas* are enlightened with knowl-



Old Painting of Kusum sarovar where Sri Uddhava spoke Bhagvatam to Queens of Dwarka

edge, *kṣatriyas* achieve victory over their enemies, *vaiśyas* acquire wealth, and *śūdras* are freed from disease. Women and lower class people all achieve the fulfillment of their desires. Therefore what fortunate person will not regularly hear and chant the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*? After many lifetimes of performing pious activities, when a person achieves full perfection then he obtains the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. By reading *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* one's devotional sentiments are awakened and Lord Krishna manifests within the heart. —*Śrīmad Bhāgavata Māhātmya, Skanda Purāṇa, Vaiṣṇava khaṇḍa, Chapter 3.* ❧

ASSOCIATION OF DEVOTEES LEADS TO TASTE IN HEARING

Srila Jiva Goswami

In spite of the fact that hearing the Lord's pastimes can easily slash the knot of *karma*, unfortunate people may not develop a taste for hearing His pastimes. Considering this possibility, Suta Goswami offers an easy method to awaken their taste. He delineates the progression of bhakti, beginning from the taste in Katha, the pastimes of the Lord, upto *naiṣṭhikā*, or fixity in devotion:

*śuśrūṣoḥśraddadhānasya
vāsudeva-kathā-ruciḥ
syānmahat-sevayāviprāḥ
puṇya-tīrtha-niṣevanāi*

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.2.16*

O twice-born sages, by serving those devotees who are completely freed from all vice, great service is done. By such service, one gains affinity for hearing the messages of Vāsudeva.

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is said: *bhuvipuru-puṇya-tīrtha-sadanānyrṣayovimadā*—“Humble sages live in the holy places,” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.87.35), and Sridhara swami comments: “Generally, the association of the sages is obtained only in holy places.” In accordance with these statements, if one dwells in or visits holy places, then by the lords grace one may attain the service of a devotee, from which a taste for hearing *kṛṣṇa-kathā* develops.

Even if one wanders into a holy place for some other purpose, one automatically gets the opportunity to see, contact or talk to devotees, who may be walking or sitting there, and these activities constitute a type of service. By the influence of such service, one develops faith in their character. The devotees naturally talk amongst themselves about the Lord, and a person who comes in contact with them develops a desire to hear, thinking, “What are

they discussing? Let me hear.” By hearing their talks, one develops a liking for them. Furthermore, the effect is immediate only when one hears from fully realized devotees. This is the sense of the above verse.

Srila Kapildeva makes a similar statement in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* :

*satāṁprasāṅgān mama vīrya-saṁvido
bhavantihṛt-karma-rasāyanāḥkathāḥ
taj-joṣaṇādāśvapavarga-varṣmani
śraddhāratirbhaktiranukramiṣyati*

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 3.25.25

In the association of pure devotees, discussion of the pastimes and activities of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is very pleasing and satisfying to the ear and the heart. By cultivating such knowledge one gradually becomes advanced on the path of liberation, and thereafter he is freed, and his attraction becomes fixed. Then real devotion and devotional service begin.

—*Bhāgavata sandharbha, Anuccheda 11*
(Translation by Satyanarayan Das) ॐ

WHAT IS THE BHĀGAVATA ?

Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur

“What sort of thing is the *Bhāgavatā*?” asks a European gentleman newly arrived in India.

With a serene look, his companion tells him, “The *Bhāgavata* is a book, that an Oriya- bearer daily reads in the evening to a number of hearers. It contains a jargon of unintelligible and savage writing of those men who paint their noses with some sort of clay or sandalwood, and wear beads all over their bodies in order to procure salvation for themselves.”

Another of his companions, who has traveled a little in the interior, would immediately contradict him and say, “The *Bhāgavata* is a Sanskrit work claimed by a sect of men, the Goswamis, who give mantras to common people, like the popes of Italy, and pardon their sins on payment of enough gold to pay their social expenses.”

A third gentleman will give a third explanation. A young Bengali, chained up in English thoughts and ideas and wholly ignorant of the pre-Mohammedan history of his own country, will add one more explanation by saying that “The *Bhāgavata* is a book, containing an account of the life of Krishna, who was an ambitious and an immoral

man!” This is all that he could gather from his grandmother before he went to school!

Thus the great *Bhāgavata* ever remains unknown to the foreigners, like the elephant of the six blind who caught hold of the several parts of the body of the beast! But Truth is eternal and is never injured but for a while by ignorance.

—*The Bhagavata, Its Philosophy, Its ethics, & Its Theology* ॐ

THE SUPREME OCCUPATION

*Conversation between Srila Suta Goswami
and Saunaka Rishi*

The supreme occupation [*dharma*] for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self. By rendering devotional service unto the Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, one immediately acquires causeless knowledge and detachment from the world.

The occupational activities a man performs according to his own position are only so much useless labor if they do not provoke attraction for the message of the Personality of Godhead. All occupational engagements are certainly meant for ultimate liberation. They should never be performed for material gain. Furthermore, according to sages, one who is engaged in the ultimate occupational service should never use material gain to cultivate sense gratification. Life's desires should never be directed toward sense gratification. One should desire only a healthy life, or self-preservation, since a human being is meant for inquiry about the Absolute Truth. Nothing else should be the goal of one's works.

—*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 1.2.6-10 ॐ



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